

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00
SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NEA-10 IO-13 EB-08 TRSE-00
OMB-01 STR-07 /089 W
-----068127 271115Z /11

O 271042Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7466
INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL
USLO PEKING
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: OVIP (FUKUDA, TAKEO)
SUBJECT: FUKUDA'S PRE-VISIT PRESS CONFERENCE

SUMMARY: IN GOOD PERFORMANCE AT PRE-SUMMIT PRESS CONFERENCE APRIL 27, PRIMIN FUKUDA SAID MAIN TOPICS HE WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS DURING WASHINGTON VISIT WERE WORLD ECONOMIC SITUATION, ASIAN PROBLEMS, MIDDLE EAST PEACE AND JULY SUMMIT IN BONN. ASKED WHAT HE WOULD TELL US, HE SAID HE WOULD STRESS IMPORTANCE OF US MILITARY AND ECONOMIC PRESENCE IN ASIA AND URGE MORE DEFENSE OF DOLLAR. IN DISCUSSING BOTH 7 PER CENT GROWTH AND CURRENT ACCOUNT DEFICIT, FUKUDA SHOWED BOTH MASTERY OF DETAIL AND OPTIMISM ON LIKELIHOOD OF ACHIEVING JAPANESE GOALS. END SUMMARY.

1. PRIMIN FUKUDA SPENT MOST OF FORTY-MINUTE TELEVISED PRESS CONFERENCE ON AFTERNOON OF APRIL 27 DISCUSSING HIS
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VISIT TO US AND HIS DESIRE TO HOLD "UNRESTRAINED" EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WITH PRESIDENT CARTER ON VARIETY OF INTERNATIONAL TOPICS. FOUR SUBJECT AREAS OF INTEREST TO HIM, FUKUDA SAID, WERE WORLD ECONOMIC SITUATION, ASIAN PROBLEMS, MIDDLE EAST PEACE AND JULY SUMMIT IN BONN. ON ASIAN PROBLEMS, HE NOTED CONCERN BY SEVERAL ASIAN LEADERS IN POST-VIETNAM PERIOD THAT US WOULD REDUCE ITS PRESENCE IN ASIA AND SAID

HE WOULD ENCOURAGE THE PRESIDENT TO REAFFIRM THAT US WOULD NOT WITHDRAW EITHER MILITARILY OR ECONOMICALLY FROM REGION. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

2. ASKED IF HE THOUGHT STRAUSS-USHIBA AGREEMENT WOULD BE TOPIC OF DISCUSSION, FUKUDA SAID HE THOUGHT NOT, SINCE GENERAL OUTLINES WERE "ALREADY SETTLED." HE DID, HOWEVER, RESTATE HIS CONFIDENCE IN ATTAINABILITY OF 7 PER CENT GNP GROWTH THIS FISCAL YEAR. IT WOULD TAKE TIME FOR IMPROVEMENTS IN TRADE RELATIONSHIP TO BE REFLECTED IN US-JAPAN CURRENT ACCOUNT BALANCE, BUT BY AUTUMN PROGRESS SHOULD BE EVIDENT. ALTHOUGH NO ONE COULD BE SURE, HE ALSO EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT JAPAN WOULD MEET ITS \$6 BILLION TRADE SURPLUS GOAL MAINLY THROUGH REDUCTIONS OF JAPANESE STEEL EXPORTS, REDUCTION OF AUTO EXPORTS TO 1977 LEVEL, REDUCTION OF TV EXPORTS FROM 250,000 SETS TO 170,000 SETS AND OTHER MEANS WHICH WOULD ACCOUNT FOR COMBINED REDUCTION OF TWO OR THREE BILLION DOLLARS. EMERGENCY IMPORTS OF ENRICHED URANIUM (ONE BILLION) AND OIL RESERVE STOCKS WOULD ALSO HELP PRODUCE THIS "SHARP CHANGE" OF PAYMENTS SITUATION. HE CAUTIONED, HOWEVER, THAT US INFLATION COULD UPSET THESE PROJECTIONS.

3. FUKUDA SAID HE WOULD NOT USE US VISIT AS EXCUSE FOR DISSOLVING LOWER HOUSE AND CALLING ELECTION. INSTEAD, POST-VISIT PERIOD WOULD BE DEVOTED TO COPING WITH ECONOMIC LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SITUATION, ALL-OUT EFFORT TO PASS JAPAN-ROK CONTINENTAL SHELF LEGISLATION IN THIS DIET SESSION AND OPENING OF NARITA AIRPORT.

4. HE WAS CAUTIOUS ABOUT SINO-JAPANESE PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP TREATY, SAYING HE WANTED HIGHER LEVEL PRC EXPLANATION OF SENKAKUS INCURSION AND, ALTHOUGH HIS INTENTION OF PROCEEDING WITH PFT HAD NOT CHANGED, HE WOULD WAIT FOR SITUATION TO CALM BEFORE CONSIDERING RESUMPTION OF NEGOTIATIONS.

COMMENT: FUKUDA'S PERFORMANCE BEFORE CAMERAS WAS THAT OF VIGOROUS, INTELLIGENT AND VERY WELL-INFORMED ECONOMIC EXPERT. LONG SERIES OF IN-DEPTH BRIEFINGS HE HAS BEEN RECEIVING ON VARIETY OF SUBJECTS AND PROBLEM AREAS APPEAR TO HAVE GIVEN HIM BOTH WIDE COMMAND OF DETAIL AND BALANCED OVER-ALL VIEW OF STATE OF US-JAPAN RELATIONS. SHERMAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TOKYO07556
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780180-0094
Format: TEL
From: TOKYO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978048/aaaaagan.tel
Line Count: 112
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 28e834b4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3035466
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FUKUDA'S PRE-VISIT PRESS CONFERENCE SUMMARY: IN GOOD PERFORMANCE AT PRE-SUMMIT PRESS CONFERENCE APRIL 27, PRIMIN FUKUDA SAID MAIN TOPICS H
TAGS: OVIP, (FUKUDA, TAKEO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/28e834b4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014